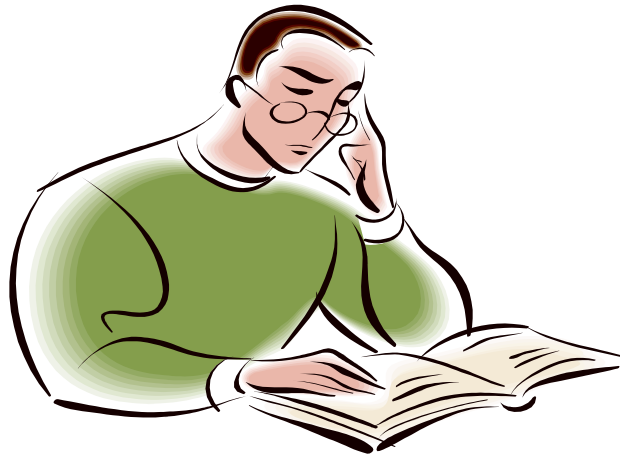


# HOW TO PREPARE GUIDE



## YOUTH SERVICES AIDE – 60801 WRITTEN EXAMINATION

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**HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE  
YOUTH SERVICES AIDE - 60801  
WRITTEN EXAMINATION**

**I.     INTRODUCTION**

A written, multiple choice examination is being given for the Youth Services Aide classification. The purpose of this guide is to help you prepare for the written exam. Since all the material you will need at the time of the exam will be provided when you take the exam, you will not be allowed to have this guide with you at the exam.

**II.    JOB PREVIEW**

The Youth Services Aide classification is used by the Department of Youth Services.

The Youth Services Aide job is non-professional work involving the supervision, observation, and rehabilitation of youth in a group living situation. Employees in this class participate in supervising resident activities in a dormitory, providing housekeeping, and recreational and rehabilitative care. Work includes assignments such as transporting youth from dormitory to athletic and recreational events or from one institution to another. Dormitory activity is manned on an around-the-clock basis and work is performed as a member of a shift, and according to oral and written instructions.

**III.   HOW THE WRITTEN EXAMINATION WAS DEVELOPED**

A study of the Youth Services Aide classification was conducted prior to the development of the examination. A number of employees who work in this class and their supervisors participated in the study. When the information was completed, the results showed that a new employee in the classification of Youth Services Aide must be able to perform several important duties. Some of these duties are listed below:

- ✓ Performs head counts in order to maintain accountability of students.
- ✓ Supervises students during work detail (inside and outside the facility) in order to ensure assigned duties are performed.
- ✓ Mentors students in order to ensure students understand program, answer questions regarding program or personal problems, and develop a rapport with students.
- ✓ Evaluates student's behavior in order to ensure compliance with program guidelines and determine student progress.
- ✓ Escorts students to school, medical facilities, medical appointments, counseling, on and off campus activities, dining, and to the supply building in order to maintain the safety and accountability of students.
- ✓ Mediates fights in order to maintain the safety and security of the students and staff.
- ✓ Conducts fire and safety drills with students in order to ensure compliance with DYS policies and procedures and ACA rules and regulations.

- ✓ Assists students with verbal and written correspondence in order to enable students to maintain interaction with their community and family.
- ✓ Scans student's verbal and written correspondence in order to identify potential threats and/or problems.
- ✓ Performs observation checks of students in confinement for suicide watch, unruly conduct and failure to follow directions in order to ensure compliance with policies and procedures, ACA rules and regulations, and ensure the safety of the students.
- ✓ Monitors bathroom and shower areas in order to maintain safety and security of the students, staff, and facility.

The study also showed that several knowledges, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are associated with the above activities. These KSAs are described below.

- ✓ **Knowledge of basic math to include addition, subtraction, division and multiplication as needed to perform head counts, dispense medications, conduct inventory, maintain supplies and assist students with homework.**
- ✓ **Knowledge of the English language to include spelling, grammar and punctuation in order to compose reports.**
- ✓ Knowledge of DYS policies and procedures as needed to remain compliant, exchange information, and work effectively within the organization.
- ✓ Knowledge of child development as needed to interact with students on their level, anticipate needs, and understand behavior.
- ✓ Knowledge of disciplinary techniques such as PIT training, and MACH controls as needed to maintain control of students and ensure security of students, staff, and facility.
- ✓ Knowledge of basic housekeeping procedures as needed to ensure cleanliness of facility and maintain a healthy environment.
- ✓ Knowledge of first aid to include application of splints and bandages, taking temperatures, and performing CPR as needed to handle emergency situations.
- ✓ Ability to communicate orally with students and staff as needed to exchange/obtain information.
- ✓ Ability to operate a two-way radio as needed to communicate throughout the facility and maintain security.
- ✓ Ability to remain calm in volatile and stressful situations as needed to control the situation.
- ✓ Ability to communicate in writing as needed to prepare reports and correspondence, and help residents with school work.
- ✓ Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships with staff and students as needed to facilitate a harmonious environment.
- ✓ **Ability to follow written and oral instructions as needed to complete work assignments effectively and efficiently.**
- ✓ **Ability to organize information as needed to maintain reports, conduct investigations, and prioritize responsibilities.**
- ✓ Ability to identify age appropriate behavior as needed to ensure an appropriate evaluation of student.
- ✓ **Ability to read and comprehend written materials such as facility procedures manuals, student files, court orders, memos, forms, letters, and dormitory logs as needed to complete forms, and ensure compliance with requirements.**
- ✓ Ability to separate personal and work related issues as needed to perform job duties effectively and efficiently.
- ✓ Ability to manage conflict as needed to evaluate cause of conflict, determine a fair and reasonable solution, and explain decision to students.
- ✓ Ability to troubleshoot potential problems as needed to resolve situations and ensure small problems do not escalate.

The examination for Youth Services Aide will measure the KSAs in **bold print**. The KSAs that are not in bold print must be demonstrated during the probationary period if you are hired into the Youth Services Aide position.

#### **IV. SAMPLE TEST ITEMS**

The Youth Services Aide exam is divided into five sections: Mathematics, Reading Comprehension, Knowledge of English, Ability to Follow Directions, and Ability to Organize.

To test your **knowledge of math**, you will be given several sets of numerical data. These data sets will be presented as a table of numbers, a mathematical formula, or in narrative form. Use the information provided to answer the questions.

##### **Example 1**

What is  $34 + 53 + 13$ ?

- (A) 90
- (B) 100
- (C) 101
- (D) 104

Answer **(B)** is correct.

To test your **ability to read and comprehend**, you will be given a passage to read. You will then be asked to answer questions based on the information in that passage.

**Example 2**

You are given a short passage. Read the passage and then select the answer that best summarizes the main idea of the passage.

To produce effective business letters, a correspondent should always formulate in his or her mind, or on paper, a simple but definite plan of what to say and how to say it.

According to the passage, which statement is true?

- (A) Some preparation for writing a letter is necessary.
- (B) There should be no direct dictation.
- (C) More attention should be given to the proper form than to content.
- (D) You do not need preparation in writing a letter.

Answer **(A)** is correct. The passage indicates that effective business letters require a correspondent to formulate a plan of what to say and how to say it.

To test your **knowledge of English**, you will answer questions that measure your knowledge of punctuation, grammar and spelling.

**Example 3**

In the following question, an asterisk (\*) replaces a punctuation mark. Select the answer that indicates the missing punctuation mark.

Mrs. Robinson, Billy's mother (\*) bakes the best chocolate chip cookies.

- (A) period (.)
- (B) colon (:)
- (C) semicolon (;)
- (D) comma (,)

Answer **(D)** is correct. The correct punctuation mark is a comma.

To test your **ability to follow directions**, you will be given specific instructions and asked to answer questions following those instructions.

**Example 4**

Jill can only participate in arts and crafts three days a week. She should never participate in arts and crafts two days in a row. Which of the following days should you schedule Jill for arts and crafts?

- (A) Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday
- (B) Thursday, Saturday and Sunday
- (C) Monday, Wednesday and Friday
- (D) Monday, Wednesday and Thursday

Answer (C) is correct.

To test your **ability to organize**, you will be given a series of information and asked to organize the information according to specific instructions.

**Example 5**

Which of the following group of words is listed in alphabetical order?

- (A) farm, family, favor, famish
- (B) family, famish, favor, farm
- (C) favor, farm, family, famish
- (D) family, famish, farm, favor

Answer (D) is correct.

## V. STUDY SUGGESTIONS

You may find some of the following ideas helpful in preparing for the exam.

- ✓ Make up your own tests and take them.
- ✓ Pretend that you are in a real testing situation and try not to talk to anyone else while you are taking the sample tests.
- ✓ Practice following instructions. Read sections of how-to books or instruction manuals you may have at home and practice taking notes or highlighting important aspects of the sections.
- ✓ Study the Sample Test Items in this How to Prepare Guide.

## VI. EXAM ADMINISTRATION INFORMATION

- ✓ Do **NOT** bring this Guide to the exam location. You will not be permitted to bring it in the testing room.
- ✓ Do **NOT** bring any of your study materials to the exam. This includes notes, manuals, and other study materials.
- ✓ **You must bring the test-scheduling card** that you will receive from the State Personnel Department to the exam. This letter lists the examination title, location of exam, and date, day, and time of examination.
- ✓ **You must also bring picture identification** to the exam location. This may be your driver's license, a military identification card, or a passport.
- ✓ **You will not be allowed to enter the exam location or take the exam without your NOTIFICATION LETTER AND PICTURE IDENTIFICATION.**
- ✓ **Bring several number 2 pencils with erasers** to the exam. It is also recommended that you bring a **highlighter**.
- ✓ You may bring a calculator to use for the Youth Services Aide examination. Small solar powered or battery operated calculators that perform basic functions such as addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, square roots, or percentages are allowed. Calculators that plug-in, utilize tape, have word processing, spelling, thesauruses, or other storage and retrieval capabilities (except basic memory functions) are not allowed. *Calculators that are a feature on a cell phone are not permitted.* Calculators are subject to inspection by exam monitors. Applicants may not borrow or share calculators at the exam site.

If you would like to request special testing accommodation, have any questions concerning the test site or testing conditions, or if you have any other administrative questions or concerns about the exam, please contact the State Personnel Department at 334-242-3389.



# TEST-TAKING TIPS

- ✓ **Listen** to the test monitors and follow their instructions carefully.
- ✓ If you are not sure of an answer, **go with your first choice**.
- ✓ Work through the test **without spending too much time on any one item**.
- ✓ If you cannot decide on the best answer to a question, **skip it, and go back to it later**.
- ✓ Use your watch or the clock in the room to **keep track of your time** during the test.
- ✓ It is to your advantage to **answer as many questions as possible**, even if you must guess.  
There is no penalty for guessing.
- ✓ **Mark your answers on the answer sheet and NOT in the test booklet**. Only answers clearly marked on the answer sheet will be given credit.
- ✓ If you have a question at any time before or during the exam, **ask the monitor for assistance**.

## **VII. BANDED SCORING**

When the written exam for Youth Services Aide is graded, the scores will be grouped into bands. When you receive notification of how you performed on the exam, you will not be given a numerical score (i.e., 67 out of 80, 93 out of 100). Rather, you will be informed into which band (i.e., 1, 3, 6, 10) your score fell. The following information is provided to help you understand the banding procedure.

### **What is banding?**

Banding is one way to reduce the impact of fluctuations in test scores that do not provide meaningful information about differences in the ability to perform the job. One important purpose of testing is to identify the differences in test scores that reflect real differences among candidates. Banded scoring is a statistical procedure for grouping raw test scores that statistically are not meaningfully different from one another. In banded scoring, bands are set objectively and statistically. They are not manipulated arbitrarily.

### **Misconceptions about banding.**

There are many misconceptions about banding and the use of banded scores. Some of the most common misconceptions are listed below. Each misconception is followed by a clarification.

#### ***Misconception: Each band should have the same number of people.***

We do not force bands to be a certain size. The people in a band are similar to each other in that statistically there is no meaningful difference in their scores. Sometimes Band 1 may be very large, and at other times it may be small. People's scores determine the size of the bands. We never know how many people will be in each band until we receive the test scores.

#### ***Misconception: Band numbers have no meaning. I don't have a score.***

Band numbers do have meaning. Think of a band as a group of tied scores. Consider that in school two students with average grades of 94.5 and 94.3 would both be grouped into the same band. Just because one student made a 94.5 and one student made a 94.3, the teacher cannot be sure that 0.2 of a point means that the student who scored 94.5 is smarter or is a better student. The scores are so close to each other that they are basically the same.

For example, think of the achievement tests that children take in school. The fine print on these tests always informs you not to focus on the numerical score but rather on the comparative score, which uses some type of grouping technique such as percentiles, standard deviations, grade levels, etc. These grouping techniques are considered forms of banding. Banding compares your performance on the test to the other test takers' performance and groups your score with others that are statistically the same.

***Misconception: Band numbers are the same as letter grades.***

Band numbers are not the same as letter grades. Band 1 does not equate to an “A,” Band 2 to a “B,” and so on. In school, a predetermined numerical range of scores (i.e., 90-100, 80-90, 70-80) equals an alphabetical value (i.e., A, B, C). This grading system is a form of banding. In this case, unlike grade school, the width of bands is not set in advance. Scores are banded only in relation to one another, so you compete against other test takers. The scores of all test takers determine the width of the bands, and your score is set in relation to the scores of your peers.

***Misconception: A banded score on one test has the same value as a banded score on another test.***

Banded scores are test specific and cannot be compared from test to test. Consider that a test taker scored 88 on one test, and the highest score of all test takers was 89. It is likely for this exam that the test taker who scored 88 would be in Band 1. However, if the same person scored the same grade on another test, and the highest score of all test takers was 100, he/she may be in Band 2 or Band 3. Candidates’ scores vary on each test, and since candidate scores determine the width of bands and into which band test takers fall, the value of a banded score varies from test to test.

***Misconception: People with the most seniority who have been on the job longest should be in the top bands.***

People with the most experience do not always fall into the top bands. Time spent in a job may not be the same as possessing a knowledge, skill, or ability needed to perform the job. The people with the strongest knowledges, skills, and abilities (or who did best on the exam) will be in the top bands. Some of the people in the top bands will have been in similar jobs for a long period of time, and others will have been in similar jobs for a short period of time. Years of service do not always equal proficiency. Candidates with seniority or experience do not automatically perform best on the test. Regardless of seniority, candidates who display the appropriate knowledges, skills, and abilities perform best on the test.

***Misconception: A standing in Band 4 or below automatically indicates failure or ineligibility for jobs.***

A band number of 4 or lower is not automatically equated with failure. For one test, there may only be 4 bands, and for another test, there may be 14 bands. Therefore, your success on the test based on your position in a band varies from test to test. Your standing in a band does not indicate whether or not you pass or fail the test. The true test of success in your employment opportunities is whether or not you can be certified and considered for a job vacancy.

***Misconception: Banding replaced the “Rule of 10.”***

Banding did not replace the “Rule of 10.” The “Rule of 10” determines the number of bands to be certified. In the past, tied scores referred to an actual numerical score (e.g., two candidates with a score of 98.98 were considered tied) while now all of the scores within a band are considered tied.

***Misconception: People in a band do not differ.***

When several people are placed in the same band, it does not mean that those people do not differ at all. Instead, it means that their scores on the exam do not differ enough to be separate scores.

## **VIII. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### ***What if I need to reschedule a written exam?***

If there is a conflict in your schedule, and you are unable to attend the written exam at the time and date for which you have been scheduled, you must resubmit your Application for Examination. The State Personnel Department will schedule you for the next available administration of this written exam.

### ***Are there any vacancies for the Youth Services Aide?***

You may contact the Department of Youth Services' Personnel Division in order to get information on current or future vacancies.

### ***How are vacancies filled for the Youth Services Aide?***

The top ten applicants on the register are sent to the Department of Youth Services for consideration. Since the banded scoring process is used, all of the scores within a band are considered tied. Therefore, all names within a band are certified out to the agency, which may include more than 10 names. The names of people not selected stay on the register to be considered for future jobs. Persons are usually hired at the minimum of the pay range.

### ***How long will I remain eligible for appointment?***

If you pass the examination, your name will remain on the employment register two years after you are placed on it. You will be notified by mail when to reapply.

### ***How can I find out my standing on the register?***

You can obtain your standing, or rank on the register, online at [www.personnel.alabama.gov](http://www.personnel.alabama.gov) . From the home page, you should click on "Applicants" and then "Register Standings", and follow the instructions. For security purposes, you must now create an online profile in order to access your standing.

### ***How long will it take for me to receive a score?***

It typically takes from 4 to 6 weeks to calculate final grades following a test administration. When final grades have been calculated, all candidates are sent a scorecard in the mail containing their grade from the examination. If you determine that all other candidates have received their scorecards and you have not, please call the State Personnel Department. We will check your mailing address and, if necessary, send you a new scorecard or a letter with your grade enclosed.